1986

# New Jews, New Destruction

Michael Henry Davis
*Cleveland State University*, m.davis@csuohio.edu



Original Citation
Michael Henry Davis, New Jews, New Destruction, Jewish Frontier (August-September 1986)

at the rostrum of the Knesset, Sadat showed Israelis by his very person that his recognition was real. But Sadat's gesture — his offering of what was for him an unreciprocated first concession — came only after years of quiet diplomacy, including Prime Minister Rabin's secret trip to Morocco in 1976, convinced him that he would in the end regain the Sinai.

Peace on Israel's eastern front is not so simple. Because of the West Bank's deeply emotional value to Israelis, no Arab leader has any assurance that a gesture like Sadat's will achieve results. Yet every month that goes by without some sort of concrete gesture from the Arab side only hardens popular Israeli images of Arab intentions, and reduces the credibility of the peace camp.

The Ifrane summit, then, was a gesture from the Arab side. Had Peres offered concessions in return, he would have reduced the summit's symbolic value to the Israeli public. At the same time he would have broken up the unity government, forcing early elections in which Labor — not Shimon Peres — would be seen as reneging on the rotation agreement. Hassan, by his feigned post-summit pique, bought himself the time to let the gesture sink in, allowing Peres to go to the voters, summit in hand, in November or thereafter.

—J.J.G.
7/27/86

## Comment

# New Jew, New Destruction

by MICHAEL H. DAVIS

While the Holocaust was certainly the most ghastly terror suffered by the Jewish people, it is not only such physical extermination that can annihilate us. In fact, of all peoples, it is we Jews who understand that our nationhood depends upon more than our simple physical survival. In recent years, many of my Jewish friends and I have come to see a threat to the fundamental moral and spiritual underpinnings of our people — a threat in the form of radical Jewish right, Kahane and his Kach kooks, the Likud and their Israeli and American cronies. The difference between the earlier threat, which monstrously materialized, and the present one, which we can control, is that we are now ready to say, "Never again."

***"We see what is essentially a New Diaspora, composed of Jews, whether in contemporary Israel or not, who share a ghetto mentality."***

We see in recent developments what is, essentially, a New Diaspora composed of Jews, whether in contemporary Israel or not, who share a ghetto mentality, afraid of what others might take as a sign of weakness and perhaps thinking of their Jewishness itself simply as vulnerability instead of a source of insuperable strength. Within Israel, they sometimes call themselves the "New Jews," but their attitudes betray them. Such a mind-set has been inherited from an older generation of Jews who, in their formative years, had no strong Israel to make all thoughts of Judaism as weakness seem absurd. The New Diaspora is largely composed of those to whom defensiveness seems synonymous with being Jewish. Others are simply their biological or psychological offspring unable to resist the fear that such defensiveness reflects.

Those of us who grew up free from those fears, whether in Israel or elsewhere, have become, I think, the real New Jews. We are not afraid that we will appear weak because we have no such fundamental inner doubts. We have always accepted Israel and our Jewish identity as in the nature of things. Having grown up alongside a strong Israel, to us the notions of strength, pride, and being Jewish go together as naturally as Purim and hamantaschen. Thus, for instance, talk of negotiation does not frighten us. Were it not for the flowering of this New Jew, the false front presented by the New Diaspora militance could threaten to annihilate us.

Logically, the appearance of this New Jew should be a source of pride to the older generation since we are, in fact, partly what Zionism sought to create: a new generation of Jews who, by having a homeland to which it could return, would have the strength and

MICHAEL H. DAVIS *was until recently a professor at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Cleveland State University. He has now settled in Israel.*

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pride that all religious and rational groups should have wherever they find themselves. Instead, the New Diaspora attacks us as disloyal and dismisses our opposition to unrestrained militarism as, incredibly, weakness.

The New Diaspora has lost the humanism which, above all else, characterizes our people. They have traded pride for compassion, militarism for charity. Because they are spiritually feeble, they see in the weakness of others only the mirror of their own. Thus, they cannot hear in the crying urge for peace, security, and yes, a homeland, uttered by sincere Palestinians anything but their own unacceptable fears. When I look at pictures of children in the Palestinian camps, I see the face of a Jew. It is incredible that the New Diaspora is so blind. It is tragic that they have abandoned the Jew's historic mission of defining what it means to be human.

A few years ago, on my third trip to Europe, but the first on which my children were able to appreciate the experience, I felt the Holocaust for the first time in a personal, though perhaps trivial, way. While we lived in Paris for two months, my wife, who, although Jewish, has non-Jewish relatives, suggested that we see some of them. It was marvelous and exciting to visit with these cousins, to be shown Versailles by real French persons, to have tea and pastries in a living room grown warm through years of similar activity while our children sat in the anteroom, playing French children's games (in storage for years until then because the youngest of the cousins is now a teenager).

Struggling homeward through the caverns of the Paris metro, I felt depressed and even resentful — first only that my wife had cousins to visit and I didn't. Then, later, it grew to anger that not just I, but my peoplehood had suffered this loss; and, likewise, that it wasn't just my wife who had this unrecognized fortune, but all the world's peoples except my own, save for those few favored, like my wife, with some non-Jewish relations. But mostly, I felt shockingly sad at the thought of an event which had always had the distant air of the unreal, much like European or even world history seems to most Americans who are, perhaps luckily, so well-shielded from history's tragedies. I could remember my youth, especially the immediately pre-Bar Mitzvah years, when I would study the Holocaust and when I was very conscious of not feeling what I knew I should have felt. I would read the stories of the gas chambers and the false stone soap, the stripping of men, women, and children together before death engulfed them, and feel the fact that I felt nothing, or worse, a mild titillation at such brutal horrors. I could sometimes force myself towards some sort of sympathy, if not empathy, by concentrating on one picture or another for minutes at a time, or by re-reading a particularly explicit paragraph over and over. But mostly, I knew that I didn't truly understand the depths of the horrors, and excused myself with the thought, repeated here and there in what I read, that the numbers and the events were too large for people truly to understand.

And so, last summer, I felt the Holocaust for the first time. I could not know and never met, of course,

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my cousins, all of whom were anonymously murdered (over 500 that we can now identify). Rather it was the failure to know them that I felt. Until that day in the Paris apartment of my in-law cousins, the loss of my own cousins had no impact. But for the first time, in that small but real way, there was some personal effect. I could not meet them. I could not stand by proudly while my three boys lined up politely to shake their hands and speak something in their native tongue. I could not have tea, while the children played in the anteroom, in an apartment grown warm with the celebration of festivals we had both celebrated in parallel fashion across an ocean which only had divided us physically. For the first time, this mammoth loss had a real, if ever so superficial, effect on my life. And, suddenly, the fact of 500 dead human cousins was real. They had escaped the anonymity of history to the reality of the present. I no longer have to reread explicit paragraphs or focus endlessly on pictures of stacked bodies to force myself to understand. A real part of my life, my family, my history, even my present, but most importantly my peoplehood, was and is stolen; the loss is mine, shared with millions of my fellow Jews, and unknown, I suspect, to all others who have suffered no similar theft.

Most important, however, it is essential to understand what it is about the Holocaust that can still have such impact upon Jews today, even upon those like me who generally have difficulty feeling its grip, its texture, absent something like my trip to that Paris apartment. It is not the loss of life or the brutal murders of innocent people who had their own homes, apartments, anterooms, and children's games. That, of course, was their tragedy, but it is not directly ours.

## Comment

Our tragedy is the loss of peoplehood, the threat of extinction that is continued by its fact, and the fear of its repetition. It is that threat I sense today — a threat of a second Holocaust not by a foreign, booted Gestapo but by our own hands. But, unlike the unbelieving European Jews of the forties, we of the eighties, except for the New Diaspora, are ready to act, because we know, as they could not, the depths of our obligation to do so. Never again — from without *or* within.

I have read lately of various Jewish groups, composed mostly of older-generation, essentially politically conservative Jews, trying to assess blame for failing to act to save my cousins. Some of these groups appear to want to avoid the truth, just like they avoided it forty years ago and allowed six million of our cousins to die. But what I read in these stories is not the petty name-calling or the cowardly posturing, hands upraised, saying, "But what could we do?" Instead, I see the threat of a second — this time *inner* — destruction because I see that very little has changed in the souls of this older Jewish generation and their younger spiritual descendants, both here and in Israel. I see that, while my people suffered a terrible, and now, to me, real physical tragedy 40 years ago, there are many ways a people can be decimated. The Diaspora was always a threat to Judaism because, scattered here and there, it lacked strength. Being Diasporan is as much a state of mind as anything else. The weakness of character of the New Diaspora is probably a source of comfort to the enemies of Israel. These Jews, afraid to criticize Israel, unwilling to see in the faces of the Palestinians human suffering as great as our own, are a larger threat to our survival than a thousand PLOs.

It is not entirely surprising that the split between Likud's supporters and their opponents resulted in physical violence, even one death, in the streets of Jerusalem on February 10, 1983. The antagonisms inherent in this dynamic between those who cannot escape the Diasporan fears of the ghetto and those who feel comfortable with their Judaism are explosive. But it is not that kind of physical violence which threatens us. The new violence of which I speak is spiritual and moral, not physical. It started when Jews were first captured by the seduction of bare might and found in it a shelter from the shame of their earlier fears. It was apparent when I was in Israel this past February where I saw the religious schools openly boycott a peace program sponsored by the Ministry of Education because the program also memorialized that Jewish death in the streets of Jerusalem.

I sat in a synagogue a while back and heard a rabbi address the congregation with a my-country-right-or-wrong speech, castigating all those Jews, within and without Israel, who would "ungratefully," as he put it, criticize Israeli adventurism (he, of course, called it "defense," or "incursions," although he slipped at one point and spoke of the Lebanon "invasions"). He was not the first representative of a false god to speak to the people of Israel. But what was disturbing was the attitude of those who listened, whose inner fears of destruction were placated by an appeal to blind nationalism. At first, as I looked at the uniformly enthusiastic nodding heads of a hundred or so mostly middle-aged, middle-class American Jews, I did not know what I saw, but I felt their threat. There is an old aphorism that says that when two Jews get together, there will be at least three different opinions expressed on any one subject. It seems that the definition of Judaism is changing because, at least to the New Diaspora, no matter how many Jews congregate, only one opinion is acceptable and it can never be critical of official Israeli policy.

It is not just the unthinking militarism of those American Jews who drape themselves in the Israeli flag which stains the beautiful blue Mogen David upon it but also the paradoxical super-nationalistic Americanism that they adopt. On the one hand they pledge undying loyalty to Israel; on the other, they insist that they are American first and perhaps last, with Jewish nationhood occupying an undefined and curious position. For me, I am a Jew first. Being an American gives me the right to insist on that because nationalism, and even patriotism, is not a requirement of citizenship. But those who are uncertain of their Jewish identity and, perhaps, of where in the American fabric such an identity, if it were stronger, might fit, see in both American and Israeli supernationalism the classic refuge of the fearful, if not the scoundrel. The problems posed by this dual nationalism, especially such a fear-ridden one, have never been confronted let alone resolved.

The New Jews' two advantages over our parents' generation are the confidence the existence of Israel provides, and the knowledge of a bitter history. That confidence and knowledge creates not only an obligation to act but, happily, the spiritual ability to do so. This means speaking out and protesting when necessary, writing where appropriate, and defending Israel against both inner and outer enemies continuously. It includes support of all reasonable elements in Israeli society with our time, and resources and, ultimately, perhaps with our children through aliyah. It surely means opposing those whose good intentions can bring nothing but ruin.

## Comment

It is, thus, this Fifth Column of well-meaning but frightened persons with whom I share Jewish peoplehood that terrifies me. No one should suspect, however, that the division between the New Diaspora and the New Jew will destroy true Jewish solidarity. It is that suspicion, of course, which fuels the controversy and which motivates the New Diaspora. The New Diaspora fears that if we appear divided on the means we will break ranks over the goals. We all want a strong and meaningful Jewish state; my friends and I, however, see no point in it being strong if it is no longer fundamentally Jewish in the most profound sense of the term. It would therefore by Pyrrhic to find, twenty years from now, a permanent and perhaps expanded Israeli presence in the Middle East which was Jewish in name only.

But unlike our pre-Holocaust parents, New Jews know that unless we speak out and take action, horrible things can all too easily happen. The new destruction will never occur as long as we fulfill the obligation to act created by our history. ■

# Little House On The West Bank

by JUDEA B. MILLER

They are young, newly married. Both have served their required time in the Israeli army — he still serving in the reserve. He was on active duty as recently as this past summer in Lebanon. But they need an apartment for themselves.

It is so expensive to purchase an adequate apartment in Jerusalem or in Tel Aviv, where they both work. Unless one has wealthy parents or is a new immigrant with help from the Jewish Agency, there is virtually no way for them to finance an apartment. But, alas, they neither have wealthy parents and both are sabras, Israeli born.

So they accepted an opportunity to join a group that is settling in Shomron, the West Bank. They drove me to the site of their settlement. It is on a rocky hilltop. The site is beautiful. There the air is clear and unpolluted, and you can easily see in the distance the low shoreline from Natanya to as far as the port of Ashdod. The high buildings of Tel Aviv are clearly visible. But the nearest major city is the Arab city of Nablus, called Shechem in Hebrew.

The couple is neither particularly religious nor so unusually nationalistic that they have chosen for reasons of piety or ideology to live in this remote, isolated community on the West Bank, surrounded and outnumbered by Arabs. There are three Arab villages nearby around them. Each has a population of at least 5,000 Arabs. This Jewish community on the West Bank has less than sixty people.

But it is the only way this Israeli couple can possibly have a decent home. It will, in fact, be a lovely private home, rather like a villa. The land is being cleared by the Jewish National Fund, which is also constructing the roads. The buildings are financed through government and Jewish Agency resources. So they will now be able to have their own lovely home on the West Bank and drive each day to their jobs in Tel Aviv.

They take turns on guard duty and have hired Arabs from one of the nearby villages to work as watchmen. They seemed to me so isolated and vulnerable there on the West Bank.

One of the Arab watchmen invited me to visit his village close by. He wanted to show me the new mechanized olive press they imported from Italy. The population of his village of 5,000 is divided among three major families who are not always friendly to each other. But the harvesting of the olives and pressing of the olive oil is an industry that involves everyone. They sell the product in Jordan.

I was shown the old presses that had been used for generations. Each of the old olive presses involved many dozens of workers and provided employment for all.

Now the village has a new, modern press from Italy, powered by a gasoline motor. It is so much more efficient but requires very few workers. One wonders what problems this new olive press may bring to the village when so many fewer people will now have work from the village olive oil industry.

I was shown the new mosque that was built for the village by one of the three major families. It is a simple, but very attractive stone building. But on a side were already graffiti written in English letters in red paint: "P.L.O."

I rode back to the new Jewish community. The sixty of them seemed so vulnerable, so isolated and exposed. When I expressed my fears to the young couple, the wife only laughed and said, "I would rather live surrounded by five thousand hostile Arabs than in Tel Aviv with my mother-in-law." ■

JUDEA B. MILLER *is rabbi of Temple B'rith Kodesh in Rochester, N.Y. and a frequent contributor to these pages.*